

Notes For SLCC In-person and Zoom Meeting 5-5-2026

Hosted by Kevin

In Attendance at the San Leandro Library, Kevin and Robbie

In Attendance For The Zoom Meeting, Kevin, Robbie, Michael S., Bob, Ron, and Don

Quick recap

The meeting focused on discussing computer hardware projects and personal updates among members of what appears to be an Atari computer enthusiasts group. Kevin demonstrated testing of a "Happy Drive" floppy disk drive that initially had issues but eventually passed diagnostics after using appropriate disks. Michael shared his development of a 5200 XCGS project, which is an add-on board that converts a 5200 game console into an 8-bit computer by replacing four main chips while maintaining the ability to switch between 5200 and XEGS modes. The board includes features like extended RAM, a Pico cart for ATR images, and S-video output capabilities. Bob mentioned receiving a box of vintage PC components including motherboards, and the group discussed various personal topics including travel experiences to Reno and casino visits.

Next steps

Kevin

- Continue troubleshooting the 5200 that won't boot with 5200 cartridges (investigate further passive components and repair as needed).
- Look up Michael's 5200 to 8-bit computer thread on Atari Age and review the project details.

Michael

- Send off the new layout for the 5200 XEGS project board to be manufactured once ready.
- Complete and release the design for the SIO port and S-Drive expansion board for the 5200 project.
- Release schematics for the 5200 XEGS project for others to modify or build upon.

Summary

Computer and Software Discussion

Scott and Kevin discussed their computers, with Scott mentioning his recent purchase of a newer laptop and issues with his older one. They also talked about TurboTax's requirement for Windows 11, with Kevin advising on how to keep the software secure on an older system. The

conversation included a brief discussion about SpaceX's Falcon launch and Starship development.

Grandchildren Visit and Equipment Updates

Bob shared updates about spending time with his grandchildren who visited from Portland, including going to dinner and walking through downtown Placerville. Bob mentioned he had received a box of computer equipment, including several 386 motherboards, which he planned to deliver to Kevin. The discussion concluded with a brief mention of Bob's ongoing solar project for his barn, though no specific updates were provided.

Robbie's Happy Drive Maintenance Issues

Kevin reported testing Robbie's Happy Drive and found that while it passes electronics and RPM tests, the read and write tests fail, likely due to dirt buildup on the drive head and rails after 20 years. The group discussed that the drive needs more thorough maintenance beyond regular cleaning, with Scott suggesting using a Q-tip and alcohol to clean the head and loops the rails. The drive was confirmed to work for basic operations like booting DOS and Happy software, but cannot format disks properly, leading to speculation that it might be due to bad disks rather than drive issues.

Double Density Floppy Disk Testing

The team discussed testing a double density floppy disk in a drive. Kevin reported that while the drive passes internal diagnostics and boots quickly, it has formatting issues with certain disks, potentially due to drive maintenance needs rather than hardware problems. Scott noted that reading a double density floppy would confirm at least 56K RAM, which the drive appears to have based on its fast boot times. The discussion included attempts to demonstrate the drive's sound during formatting, though participants had difficulty hearing it due to microphone and camera settings.

Happy Drive Testing Discussion

The group discussed testing a happy drive, with Kevin successfully formatting disks and running diagnostics that passed. Ron joined the meeting briefly and confirmed he had received an email about something, though the context was unclear.

5200 XCGS Console Conversion Project

Michael discussed his 5200 XCGS project, which converts a 5200 console into an 8-bit computer while maintaining 5200 functionality. The board replaces four main chips and adds features like 1MB extended RAM, a Pico cart equivalent, and an SIO port. Michael also shared his work on integrating a PS2 keyboard into a 5200 case, creating a hybrid system similar to an 800XL. The discussion included details about video output capabilities and the project's open-source nature, with Michael planning to release the schematics for others to modify and build upon.